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5 Tips to Help You Become a Better Blogger



Here's something that I penned for "Insights" two years ago for my 20th year anniversary as a securities law blogger - it will be 22 years next week! Given my experience, I thought I would share a few ideas about what it takes to become a blogger that people will enjoy:

The first thing to consider is "what is the purpose of blogging?" The primary goal often is to help market yourself. Nothing wrong with that. That is a core tenet in life – to get others to like you. The key in any personal or work relationship. Some people feel a clench when they hear the term "marketing" but it doesn't have to be painful. It doesn't have to feel offensive if you realize that's part of the bargain of being a human.

So how to best market yourself on a blog? The simple answer is "be human." People enjoy reading things that feel like there is a human on the other side of the keyboard. They struggle to read content that is sterile.

Here's five quick tips:

1. Don't feel pressure to be someone you're not - This is about finding your "voice." So that you can connect as you – whomever that may be – with the community. People can "feel" who the author is. How you think and speak is unique to you – try to have that shine through.

Personally, I feel like I come through my writings as a little bit of a meathead. What I mean is that I'm not the most eloquent writer. But that's okay. That works for a lot of readers. I'm simple, direct and willing to share.

By presenting yourself as a human, you're building trust – and a relationship ensues. Everyone out there isn't going to love what you do. That's just the way life is and you can't avoid it. Even the best rainmakers don't land every client, right? Just a small fraction.

The bottom line is to be authentic. Did what I just write sound like me? Or is it too staid? Too bold? If you're a playful person, let that shine through. If you're not, don't pretend to be. And of course, if what you wrote doesn't sound like it was written by a human, then that's not you. You're a human.

2. Each blog entry should have a single author – Your blog entries should come from you. There might be others who participate and review and all that. But it's important that we're connecting as humans. If a blog entry has multiple entries, it's hard to connect. If you can, you might even have a miniature picture of yourself by your byline to further illustrate your humanness.

If you want to call out someone for their help in formulating the thoughts in a particular blog entry, that's fine. Calling them out in the body of a blog is more powerful anyway than sharing a byline that no one will likely see or spend the time to parse.

3. Length of the blogs can be fairly short – People have short attention spans these days. I believe the best blogs are pretty short – three to six paragraphs should be plenty.

You can have stories that are "to be continued" as a device to cover a lot of ground. That may happen naturally on occasion anyway as you get feedback on a particular blog and that commentary in response will provide you with ideas for new blogs. Once you get going, the momentum can really take you places you didn't expect to go. That can be fun.

Of course, you may want to draft a lengthy piece periodically and that's okay too. Some human interest stories – the gripping ones - may best be told in one shot and not in a series of blogs.

4. If you can, tell stories – The small details are what sets a good blog apart from one that is not. Are there anecdotes in what you just wrote? The more informal conversational nature of what you write, the better. I always say, "write like you speak." When you have a conversation, note how often you and your partner are telling a tale. That's how humans naturally communicate.

And of course, the choice of topics is important. Is my topic one that my core audience will care about. Is it something that is on people's mind? Or should be? Or am I just parroting others without considering what the audience really cares about?

5. Develop a journalist's ear - You'll find that once you get into blogging, you'll develop a journalist's ear. What do I mean by that? You'll be talking to someone - or watching a show on TV - and something will spark an idea for a blogging topic.

Or spark an idea for just a turn of phrase that you like. For example, a while back, I was watching Dan Rather interview the members of Crosby, Stills, & Nash and Graham Nash mentioned how "our life is made up of ordinary moments" which is how he banged out the lyrics of their song "Our House" in about 10 minutes. Ordinary moments? What a great line and something that I used as a line in the very next blog entry.

When you get these flashes - these ideas - the key is to write them down right away. Or you will likely forget. That's one of the keys to being a journalist. Carrying a pad around or writing down notes in your phone on a regular basis.

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